

# History Highlights

Prior to the arrival of European settlers, much of the land in the area was natural prairie, grazed by herds of buffalo. The peaks, marked the boundary between the hunting lands of the Catawba and Cherokee Indians, and a major trading route of the Cherokees crossed Crowders Mountain. By 1775, approximately 80,000 settlers had migrated to the area from colonies to the north. A treaty in 1777 allowed white settlers as far west as the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Catawbas retreated peacefully southward but conflicts between the settlers and Cherokees persisted until after the Revolutionary War.

During the American Revolution, the “over-mountain men” won a major victory for the colonists at nearby Kings Mountain. This small volunteer army was composed of hunters, farmers and herdsman from the fertile valleys west of the Alleghanies. Their conquest of British loyalists at Kings Mountain marked the first step of defeat that led to Cornwallis’ surrender and the end of a long and bitter war. Learn more about this famous battle at nearby Kings Mountain National Military Park in South Carolina.

**The Gold Rush:** The discovery of gold had considerable impact on the area. In 1799, a 17-pound gold nugget was discovered and another weighing 28 pounds was discovered in 1803. Soon after, significant quantities of the treasured mineral were uncovered near Crowders Mountain and until the discovery of gold in California in 1849, North Carolina was the chief gold-producing state in the nation. Hundreds of mines scarred at least ten counties during this North Carolina gold rush. Kyanite was also strip mined near Crowders Mountain, producing a devastating effect on the environment.

**A Park Established:** When exploratory drilling and excavation began in 1970, the threat that Crowders Mountain would be strip-mined led local citizens to seek its preservation. The Gaston County Conservation Society was organized in order to block mining operations and to encourage the state to acquire the mountain for a park. Based upon the group’s proposal, the state approved Crowders Mountain as a potential state park. A year later, funds were appropriated for land acquisition. The state park opened to the public in 1974 but it was not until 1977 that the summit of Crowders Mountain was included within the park boundary. Kings Pinnacle and additional acreage were acquired in 1987. In 2000, an additional 2,000 acres connecting the park to Kings Mountain State Park in South Carolina was purchased.

# Rock Climbing

Experienced climbers will enjoy the challenges of Crowders Mountain. Climbing is permitted in designated areas only and all climbers must register according to park regulations. Basic rock climbing safety equipment and techniques must be used at all times. Pitons, bolts or similar devices that may damage cliff faces are not permitted.

# The Peaks

Rising 800 feet above the surrounding countryside, resisting the forces of erosion over vast periods of time, are Crowders Mountain and Kings Pinnacle, remnants of an ancient mountain range. Once the core of mighty mountains that towered thousands of feet above sea level, these surviving peaks are part of the Appalachian chain that formed in the region 450 to 500 million years ago. Geologically classified as kyanite-quartzite monadnocks, only the strength of quartzite has allowed these pinnacles to withstand the wind, water and other forces that eroded less resistant peaks.

Crowders Mountain, at an elevation of 1,625 feet, is a registered natural heritage area that features sheer vertical cliffs ranging from 100 to 150 feet in height. Kings Pinnacle, by contrast, has a round, gentle profile and reaches an elevation of 1,705 feet. These mountains and the saddle that connects them are oriented in a northeast to southwest direction, their slopes facing east and west. Spectacular views await those who ascend these mighty pinnacles.

# Park Improvements

Completed in late 2008, the Boulders Access Area, located near the South Carolina state line off Van Dyke Road, provides access to the Ridgeline Trail, which connects to Crowders Mountain State Park, Kings Mountain State Park and Kings Mountain National Military Park. Facilities include a parking lot, contact station and restrooms.

# On the Lake

Watch a long, lazy afternoon slip away while enjoying the park’s beautifully wooded lake. Located near the park office and picnic ground, the nine-acre manmade lake has ample parking nearby.

For those who like to be afloat, canoes can be rented at the park office. Paddle to secluded spots along the shoreline where the only sound is the ripples of the water. Fish from choice fishing spots on the banks or try your luck from the seat of a canoe. Bass and bream are just waiting to be caught. Anglers must possess a North Carolina fishing license. Swimming and private boats are not permitted on the lake.



# Camping

When you’ve finished exploring for the day, settle in for a long night’s sleep. Located approximately one mile from the park office are secluded areas for camping so private, there’s often not another person in sight. Both campgrounds are accessed by trail and all supplies must be packed to the campsites. Campers must register at the park office.

**Backcountry Family Camping:** A one-mile trail leads to the forested camping area where each campsite has a grill, picnic table and tent pad. Drinking water and pit toilets are provided. Foregoing a few of the comforts of home is worth it when every stream, tree and flower seems made just for you. A modest fee is charged for campsites, which are available on a first-come basis.

**Backcountry Group Camping:** Larger groups will enjoy fellowship in the group camping area. Each of six group sites will accommodate 10 to 15 people. Camping areas include a fire circle for cooking and a picnic table. Pit toilets and water are located nearby. Advance reservations are required and a modest fee is charged.

# Picnicking

The shade of large trees provide a cool spot for outdoor dining in a beautiful wooded area. Scattered throughout the picnic area are 28 tables and eight grills. Drinking water and restrooms are located nearby. There are also several picnic tables available at the Linwood Access Area.

Two large shelters are available for group picnics. Shelters offer tables and grills. Reservations are suggested to be certain of availability. Use of the shelters is free of charge unless reservations are requested.

# Take A Hike

Enjoy a sun-filled morning of rock climbing, followed by a hike in a shady forest. The beauty and diversity of Crowders Mountain State Park are best appreciated along the miles of hiking trails. Easily accessed from the parking areas, hiking trails lined with wildflowers and mountain laurel lead along the ridges and to the summits of Crowders Mountain and Kings Pinnacle. Others are easy promenades through pastoral surroundings. Circle the lake on a gravel path, view aquatic plants and animals along a narrow creek or hike to the summit of Crowders Mountain and be rewarded with sweeping panoramas. Bring along a pair of binoculars and do some birdwatching or tote a camera and capture the beauty of wildflowers in bloom.

For information on the length and difficulty of park trails, see the map legend.



# Flora & Fauna

**Plant Life:** Most of Crowders Mountain is a mature climax forest of hardwoods. Areas once disturbed by fire and logging are now being restored by the processes of succession. Shrubby growth, followed by pines, is now being replaced by hardwoods such as red maple, American beech and several varieties of oak.

Beautiful blossoms may be encountered along park trails. Flowering dogwood is plentiful and spring-blooming mountain laurel is abundant throughout the park, particularly on Crowders and Pinnacle trails. Rhododendron also grows at high elevations.

Ferns, from the delicate to the hardy, are common in the park. Ferns over six feet tall grow on the north ridge of Crowders Mountain. Bracken fern grows in sunny spots and cinnamon, netted chain and southern lady ferns grow along the streams and in moist soil of bogs.

The ridge-top forest is unusual as many species, especially Virginia pine, are dwarfs growing only 3 to 6 feet in height. A few specimens of the blighted American chestnut still persist on the ridge. Bear oaks, a threatened species, can also be found at the summits of Crowders Mountain and Kings Pinnacle.

**Animal Life:** The park’s forests are home to an abundant and diverse animal population, though many species are evidenced only by an occasional footprint. Crayfish, minnows and a variety of frogs make their homes in clear, cold streams. Creek mud and boggy soil often show signs of muskrat, raccoon and Virginia opossum.



# Nature's Classroom

Crowders Mountain State Park holds the key to many of nature’s best-kept secrets. Unlock the door to nature’s classroom and watch the mysteries begin to unfold. Our rangers will guide you on exciting explorations where you’ll uncover fascinating natural surroundings and make great discoveries about the world in which we live. Bring our state’s rich natural and cultural heritage alive; embark on a learning adventure at Crowders Mountain and discover the wonders of these ancient peaks.

Join a regularly scheduled interpretive program or contact the park office to arrange a special exploration for your group or class.

# For Your Safety

Dusky and two-lined salamanders are often found under rotted logs, leaves and rocks in moist areas. Wetland habitats also house many species of turtles, such as mud, snapping and spiny softshell turtles.

Upland areas and mountain ridges support a variety of animals including chipmunk, eastern cottontail and red and gray foxes. The tunnels of eastern moles, formed when the small burrowers search for food below ground, are often seen in the soft earth along hiking trails. Among resident amphibians and reptiles are Fowler’s and American toads, slimy salamanders, eastern box turtles and several species of snakes. Though most of the snakes found in the park are harmless and rarely encountered, the copperhead and rattlesnake are poisonous and hikers should be alert.

Birds are abundant in all seasons, especially in

spring when migrating aviates add to the resident population and the otherwise quiet mountain air is filled with the melodies of songbirds. More than 160 species of birds, including waterfowl, wading birds, hawks, owls and woodpeckers have been recorded in the park. While some birds visit the park only for a season, others make the park their permanent home. Among them are black and turkey vultures, who roost on isolated rock outcrops near the mountain peaks and fly into the surrounding countryside in search of food.

# Rules & Regulations

Make your visit a safe and rewarding experience. Some of our regulations are posted, for the protection of our park and our visitors. A complete list is available at the park office. Help preserve our natural resources by observing the following:

- ❑ The removal of any plant, animal, rock or artifact is prohibited.
- ❑ All state parks are wildlife preserves. Hunting or trapping is not permitted. Fishermen must obey the regulations of the Wildlife Resources Commission.
- ❑ Do not litter; place trash in proper receptacles. State law requires aluminum cans be put in recycling containers.
- ❑ Firearms and fireworks are not permitted.
- ❑ The possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.
- ❑ North Carolina motor vehicle and traffic laws apply in the park.
- ❑ Pets must be on a leash no longer than six feet.
- ❑ Camping is permitted in designated areas by permit only.
- ❑ Swimming or launching private boats are not permitted on the park lake.
- ❑ Fires are permitted only in designated areas.
- ❑ Rock climbing is permitted in designated areas only. Climbers must register before beginning to climb.

# For Your Safety

To prevent accidents, remember these safety tips.

- ❑ Rock climbing in the park is for experienced climbers only. All safety equipment and techniques must be employed.
- ❑ When hiking, stay on designated trails and away from cliff faces.
- ❑ Be alert to approaching storms and seek appropriate shelter.
- ❑ Poisonous snakes, ticks and poison ivy may be found along park trails. Exercise caution.
- ❑ Remember daylight hours are shorter in the fall and winter. Allow plenty of time for a hike to avoid being caught by darkness.

Contact park staff for other safety tips or for an explanation of park rules.



# Welcome!

Raptors soar gracefully in the wind currents. Vegetation reaches into the horizon in a sea of green. Sheer vertical cliffs drop 150 feet. Enjoy the spectacle from a front row seat. High atop Kings Pinnacle, the highest point in Gaston County, captivating views stretch for more than 20 miles.

For a closer view of nature's marvels, journey across the park's many miles of trails. The gently rolling landscape of the North Carolina Piedmont offers a variety of terrain. Dip into the valleys. Cross the foothills. Crest the peaks. Quiet woods, trickling streams and melodious birdsongs await.

These spectacular surroundings, like the unique habitats in many other state parks, would not exist were it not for the efforts of concerned citizens, dedicated to protecting our environment from continued threats by man. Visit this mountain treasure and cherish it, for it was preserved for you and yours to come.



## Information

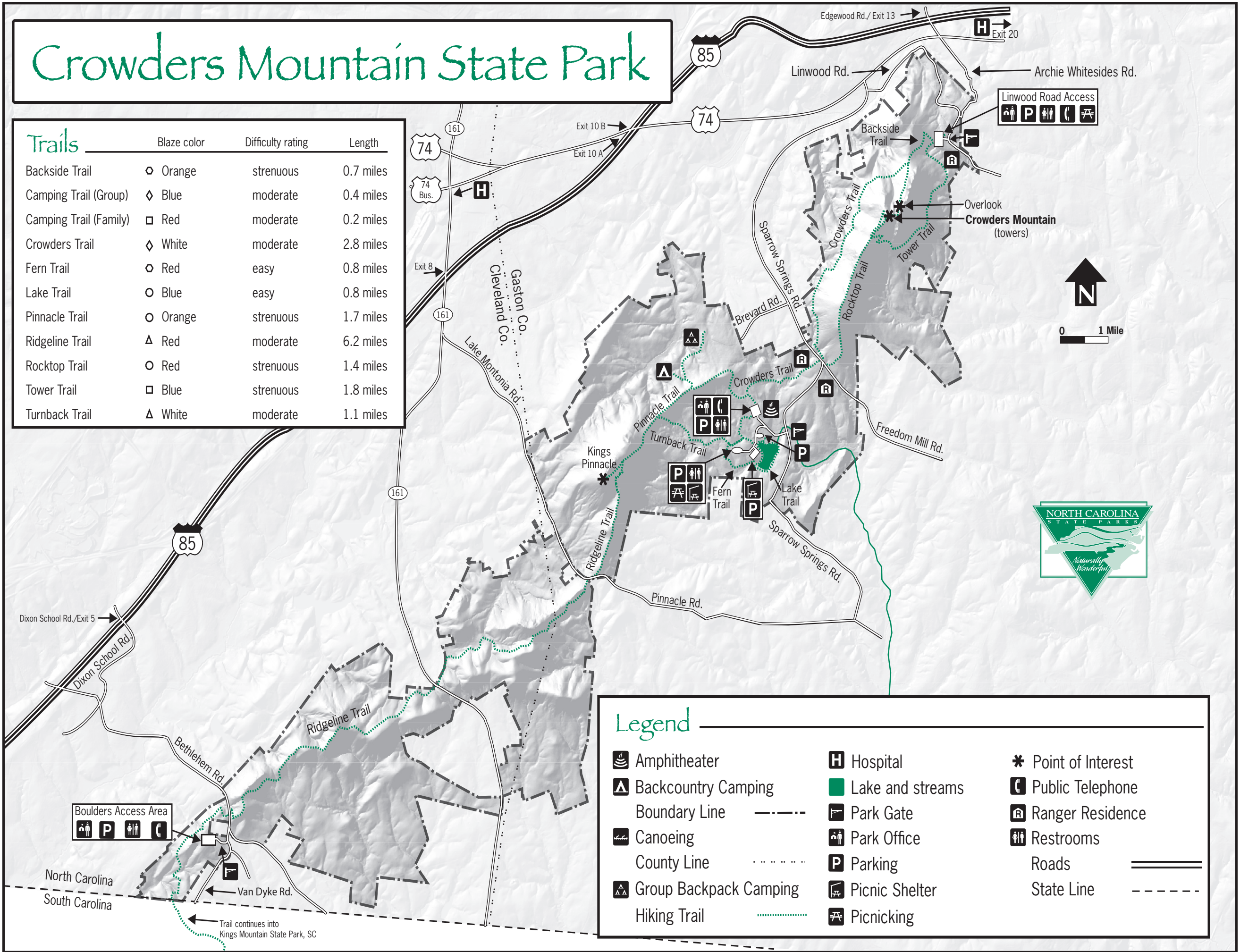
To learn more about Crowders Mountain State Park, contact:

Crowders Mountain State Park  
522 Park Office Lane  
Kings Mountain, NC 28086  
(704) 853-5375  
denr.dpr.crowders.mountain@lists.ncmail.net  
www.ncparks.gov

Discover other North Carolina state parks and recreation areas, contact:

N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation  
Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources  
Mail Service Center 1615  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1615  
(919) 733-4181

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N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation  
Department of Environment and Natural Resources



# Crowders Mountain State Park



Crowders Mountain State Park is located in Gaston and Cleveland counties, 30 miles west of Charlotte. Take I-85 exit 13 (Edgewood Rd.), turn left and go to U.S. Hwy. 74 (Franklin Blvd.). Turn right and go about three miles to Sparrow Springs Rd. Go left and follow the park signs.

## Park Hours

November - February	8 a.m. - 6 p.m.
March, April, September & October	8 a.m. - 8 p.m.
May - August	8 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Closed Christmas Day	